



March 3, 2021

Maryland Senate Budget & Tax Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
Annapolis, MD

Dear Senators and Fellow Marylanders,

Washington County has experienced significant change over the past couple of years with regard to family activities in downtown Hagerstown. Our existing baseball stadium is old and most would say beyond repair, not the least reason being that it lies in a floodplain. And we have recently lost our Minor League Baseball team. A new facility in a new location is sorely needed to promote Downtown Revitalization, growth in tourism and hospitality, and being home to a newly planned Baseball team.

The University System of Maryland at Hagerstown specifically has Downtown Revitalization in its Mission Statement. Not only do we pursue it with our own expansions, but support other organizations in their efforts to revitalize downtown. Every USMH academic building (4) was vacant and in need of significant reconstruction before put into use. We have also worked with local developers in creating private student housing. Both such buildings were vacant eyesores and now with private investment, these buildings are generating income for the developers and providing needed residence for our students. We are seeing the impact of all of these investments on our downtown core, and believe that investment in a new stadium and multi-activity facility will further strengthen the city's economy.

Our Hospitality and Tourism Management degree program, offered by the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, is newly housed in what was an old vacant bank building. We are leasing this space from developers who invested significantly in its renovation to our specs, placing it once more on the tax rolls. The new stadium being proposed in Senate Bill 926 would be another contributor to Washington County's second-largest economic driver – the Hospitality and Tourism industry.

We heartily support the construction of a new facility for multi-use family activities in Downtown, including being home to a new Minor League Baseball team, other sports and outdoor events. This facility, and the teams and activities it would attract, should bring increased foot traffic and vibrancy to Downtown, and should increase the likelihood of keeping residents in the County and potentially new ones moving in. We would work in close partnership with this initiative.

I trust you will give every consideration to support of Senate Bill 926.

Sincerely,

Mark C. Halsey  
Executive Director

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